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SUBJECT: Codel Dodd Meeting with Argentine President Fernandez de
Kirchner

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Summary

1. (SBU) President Fernandez de Kircher met with Codel Dodd for over an hour May 29. On Bolivia, she called for a solution which respected democratic institutions and avoided "Balkanization." More broadly in Latin America, the President said she hoped for increasing regional integration in the years ahead and that the United States would support and be part of this process, as such integration and development would increase America's own security. She said she hoped the next President of the United States would signal that the United States knows that the economic and democratic development of the region is vital to the U.S. and place a priority on supporting those processes. She argued that the world food situation demanded long term vision, commitment and cooperation, and that the Middle East would undoubtedly be near the top of the foreign policy agenda for the new U.S. president. Asked about anti-Americanism in Argentina, CFK noted the many historic roots of this phenomenon but argued that the image of the U.S. could improve notably as the broader image and role of the U.S. in the world evolved. The tone of the conversation was friendly and relaxed through-out. End summary.

2. (SBU) On the evening of May 29, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) received Senator Christopher Dodd (D - CT) and Representative Xavier Becerra (D - CA) for a little over an hour. U.S. Ambassador Wayne, Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, and Argentine Ambassador to the U.S. Hector Timerman also attended.

Bolivia

3. (SBU) Senator Dodd explained that he had just come from Bolivia, where he had met with the Vice President and with the leader of the Podemos political party. CFK commented that she hoped a way could be found to restart the process of institutionalization in Bolivia and to avoid the serious problems for the region that will arise if the political situation continues to deteriorate. The key, she argued, is a process that respects democracy and existing institutions. "What we don't want to see is the Balkanization of Latin America," she concluded.

U.S. Elections

4. (SBU) CFK asked the Senator and Representative their impressions about the state of play in the U.S. elections. Senator Dodd said he was supporting Senator Obama, but that there will be significant change regardless of which of the three candidates wins the

election. He shared specific insights related to the current state of play in the electoral contest.

Latin American Integration

15. (SBU) Senator Dodd said that during the coming months of electoral competition in the U.S., it is important that voices of moderation and wisdom be heard in Latin America. If the candidates only hear about and from the likes of Chavez and Morales, they will find it harder to set out a wise Latin America policy. He also asked what CFK thought were the important themes for Latin America in the years ahead. CFK said she hoped that Latin America would gradually move to more integration, just as Europe had done starting with the initial efforts of France, Germany, and the Benelux countries. CFK said she knows what a key role the United States played in supporting European integration and she hopes the USG will support and participate in Latin America's increasing integration. This process could be the best defense against terrorism and a real solution to the immigration problem, she argued. The United States worked very hard to achieve its powerful and wealthy position in the world, she continued, but along with that comes the responsibility to help others in the hemisphere to grow their economies and create opportunities so their people don't feel the pressing need to emigrate to the United States to achieve a good life. This process clearly needs a commitment to a long-term vision by the leaders in the United States and in Latin America, she said.

Speculation and Food

16. (SBU) At present, CFK said the weak dollar and the soaring demand for food and oil are creating serious problems for leaders all over the world. She said she was worried about the effect of speculators and investment funds in Argentina's economy and elsewhere. Clearly, regulation of these groups had to be better, she said. Turning to the food situation, she noted that the world was today producing 30% more calories than ten years ago, but there were clearly still problems in distribution. Countries in the world with great potential as food producers should apply the best of new technologies to maximize their potential with the help of the most developed countries. Countries, like many in Africa, where there are serious structural limits on food production should benefit from technology and support to make the structural changes needed to increase their ability to produce and distribute food. This process will take years and requires bold international leadership, CFK argued. In this connection, the conversation turned to the desirability of getting the U.S. public and leaders to focus on the needs of the world. The Senator noted that the expectations on the new U.S. president to solve many problems at home and abroad would be very high.

Middle East Vital

17. (SBU) CFK argued that the new President's attitude toward the Middle East Peace Process would be vital. If the USG is able to make progress there, it will seriously undermine the radicalization process in the Islamic world. In this context, CFK said that she was very positively impressed with current Israeli Foreign Minister Livni, whom she has met a couple of times.

What the New U.S. President Should Say: "Latin America is Part of Us"

18. (SBU) Senator Dodd asked CFK what the new U.S. president should say about Latin America. CFK said that the key message would be that the United States sees Latin America as part of itself, and thus as a priority for the U.S. The idea would be a set of policies aimed at significantly lifting Latin America's living and institutional standards so citizens of other countries in the region don't feel the need to go to the United States to improve their lives. In this context, she and the Foreign Minister noted that Argentina also has many immigrants: two million-plus Bolivians, one million Paraguayans, and about 400,000 Uruguayans. CFK noted that they play an important economic role for Argentina. For example,

the Bolivians are key workers in the construction, vegetable, and flower industries. In this connection, she noted that the United States and Latin America are fortunate that the vast majority of their immigrants don't bring the cultural clash that so many immigrants to Europe bring in terms of stark religious and racial differences.

Argentine Anti-Americanism

¶9. (SBU) Senator Dodd asked why there was such a high level of anti-Americanism evident in polls in Argentina compared to other Latin American countries. CFK said in her view there are many historical reasons for the high level of anti-Americanism, though it was striking that no political leader of Argentina had made this a central part of his or her platform. She recounted a number of historical examples from the policies of the Radical party leaders after WWI to the alignment of U.S. Ambassador Braden with the opposition and against President Peron after WW II. She noted that, at its core, antipathy towards our country seemed to be rooted in a sentiment of wanting to differentiate Argentina from the United States, but she added that there are also very positive memories of Kennedy and of Carter and his human rights policies when Argentina was under military rule. In the 1990s, the attitude toward the United States had been more positive as well. CFK posited that, with a change in the U.S. role and image in the world, the attitudes in Argentina would change for the better, too.

Comment

¶10. (SBU) CFK was open and friendly throughout the conversation. She commented that her recent meetings with senior U.S. officials had been positive, and made clear that she hoped relations would get better, praising in particular the work of A/S Shannon to get bilateral relations back on a good path.

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